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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001326

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [PBTS](#) [PTER](#) [MASS](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: NINEWA: COUNSELOR COHEN DISCUSSES ENERGY CRISIS,  
ARTICLE 140 WITH PROVINCIAL LEADERSHIP

REF: A) BAGHDAD 00775 B) BAGHDAD 00559

Classified By: Ninewa PRT Team Leader James Knight: 1.4 (B) and (D)

This is a Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (C) Counselor Cohen met Ninewa Vice Governor Khasro Goran and members of Ninewa's Provincial Council at the Governor's guest house in downtown Mosul 28 Mar. Khasro took a surprisingly mild perspective on resolution of disputed territories in Ninewa, but emphasized the overwhelming obstacle to economic recovery now posed by the province's energy crisis. Khasro also noted impediments to Ninewa's democratic evolution and economic vitality imposed by centralized GOI authority in Baghdad. END  
SUMMARY.

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NINEWA'S POLITICS ARE ETHNIC, NOT SECTARIAN . . .  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) Counselor of the Department of State Eliot Cohen met Ninewa Vice Governor Khasro Goran and Ninewa Provincial Council leadership on 28 March. Dr. Cohen was joined by State Department Deputy Coordinator for Iraq Dr. Barbara Stephenson and Military Advisor to the Counselor Col. Stephen Ganyard, as well as Team Leader Knight and other PRT representatives.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Khasro opened the meeting by thanking Dr. Cohen for continued U.S. support for Iraq. He emphasized that most problems and challenges in Ninewa are ethnic rather than sectarian. For example, the majority Arab Sunni boycott of Provincial elections in 2005 continues to skew political discourse in Ninewa.

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. . . HAUNTED BY SADDAM'S LEGACY . . .  
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[1](#)4. (SBU) Khasro observed Ninewa's problems fundamentally stem from 40 years of oppression under Saddam. The effects of Saddam's rule continue to stunt political and economic development in Iraq. One is the GOI's quote deadly centralization unquote that slows reconstruction efforts -- Khasro stressed the importance of devolving fiscal authority to the provincial level.

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. . . BUT ON A CONSTITUTIONAL PATH  
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[1](#)5. (C) Dr. Cohen asked Khasro's view of the way forward for Iraq; Khasro insisted that the only

route is through the Constitution and the engagement of political moderates. Khasro gave the Constitution's Article 140 process for resolution of territories disputed by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) as an example of an issue that can only be resolved by working within the Constitution.

¶16. (C) Khasro then emphasized that that free and fair provincial elections monitored by the new GOI Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) should follow completion of the Article 140 process. Dr. Stephenson queried Khasro regarding use of the current electoral list system (under which voters choose a party rather than individuals). Khasro noted positive and negative aspects of both the list system and voting for individuals, but observed that this issue can only be addressed by the Council of Representatives (COR) level -- fundamentally, the central issue is a sound, broad-based electoral process.

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ECONOMIC RECOVERY HINGES ON FUEL  
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¶17. (SBU) Khasro then pointed out that the Iraqi people are thankful for the freedoms they now enjoy, but such freedoms do not feed people. Economic recovery is critical -- but many citizens believe Ninewa is worse off than before 2003. In response to a query from Dr. Cohen, Khasro agreed that Ninewa has tremendous economic potential, but that enduring fuel shortages block its economic recovery.

¶18. (C) Warming to the issue, Khasro emphasized supply and

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distribution are his greatest challenges as Vice Governor. He underscored that Ninewa has not received regular shipments of fuel since November 2006 (reftel A). Khasro added that the GOI is incapable of resolving the fuel crisis -- and suggested that Coalition forces should have built refineries in the KRG.

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SECURITY IN NINEWA IS BETTER . . .  
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¶19. (C) Khasro criticized international media portrayals of Iraq, noting that the violence seen on television overshadows positive developments in Ninewa. Aside from Mosul and Tal'Afar -- both densely populated and presenting the same security challenges of other cities -- Ninewa is relatively calm. In response to Dr. Cohen's question regarding those responsible for Ninewa's security problems, Khasro noted that former Ba'athists and al-Qaeda adherents are the main insurgents in the province.

¶10. (C) Dr. Cohen then queried the impact of Coalition forces' withdrawal from Ninewa. Khasro energetically insisted that any immediate withdrawal would be catastrophic. He continued to note that Coalition forces should focus on training and equipping Iraqi security forces.

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. . . NO THANKS TO SYRIA  
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¶11. (C) Khasro then highlighted how unhelpful Syria, Turkey, and Iran have been for Iraq. He focused on Syria, pointing to Syria's fear that its Ba'ath government will be overthrown if Iraq becomes an example for the Middle East. Part of Ninewa's particular problem with Syria is the more than 300 kilometers of unsecured border Iraq shares with Syria.

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COMMENT  
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¶12. (C) Khasro's muted discussion of the Article 140 process in this meeting contrasts sharply with earlier presentations of his views, and may signal a softening of his insouciant pursuit of the KRG expansion agenda -- although his views continue to be clearly those of the KRG's leading advocate in Ninewa. It is noteworthy -- and entirely appropriate -- that Ninewa's energy crisis has now floated to the top of Khasro's agenda -- he has heretofore been primarily engaged in energetic pursuit of Article 140. END COMMENT.

¶13. (U) Counselor Cohen has cleared this message.  
CROCKER